# Evaluation of the Humanitarian Migrants to Israel (HMI) Program

## Evaluation Report

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| COR | Contracting Officer's Representative |
| CNC | Computer Numerical Control |
| DOS | Department of State |
| EDM | Evaluation Design Matrix |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussions |
| FSU | Former Soviet Union |
| GBV | Gender Based Violence |
| HMI | Humanitarian Migrants to Israel |
| ISMEA | Israel Small and Medium Enterprises Authority |
| JAFI | Jewish Agency for Israel |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MATI | Small Business Development Center |
| PRM | Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration |
| TBD | To Be Determined |
| TL | Team Leader |
| UIA | United Israel Appeal |
| U.S. | United States |

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of State (DOS), Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) supported Humanitarian Migrants to Israel (HMI) Program provides financial resources for the resettlement of humanitarian migrants from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), Eastern Europe, Africa, the Near East and other countries of distress in Israel. The grant is implemented by the United Israel Appeal (UIA) through Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) who manage a network of absorption centers throughout the country. The program's goal is to integrate FSU and Ethiopian migrants into the larger Israeli society through Hebrew language acquisition, preparation for and entry into the workforce, and the attainment of permanent housing.

The following are the stated DOS/PRM objectives of the program:
- **Objective 1:** Humanitarian migrants receive necessary services (including processing en route care, maintenance, and transportation to Israel) and are satisfied with these services.
- **Objective 2:** To increase the number of Ethiopian migrants leaving absorption centers for permanent housing within 24 months after arrival.
- **Objective 3:** To enable participants of Hebrew-language classes to successfully advance to a higher level.
- **Objective 4:** Post-high school students complete a nine-month program to prepare them for university level education or technological programs in Israel.

Program activities begin in the migrant's countries of origin and include, but are not limited to beginning language training, introductions to Israeli society, and guidance on the process of immigration. However, this will not be included in this evaluation. After arrival in Israel, migrants either go directly into the larger community or settle into one of twenty-one absorption centers located throughout Israel.

The evaluation's scope included identifying international best practices, specifying areas of opportunity for the program, and providing actionable recommendations geared towards improving the program. The evaluation questions are listed as part of the recommendation section below.

The HMI Evaluation used a mixed-methods design with a dominant qualitative approach, incorporating the use of three methods to collect primary and secondary data including (1) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs); (2) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); and (3) a Desk Reviews of best practices The design included collecting data from absorption center staff, UIA/JAFI management staff, and current and past absorption center residents. The evaluation used a purposeful sampling strategy to identify the migrants to be interviewed: the criteria included (1) country of origin; (2) gender distribution; (3) long-term and short-term residents; (4) age; and (5) vulnerable groups (elderly, single parents, etc.). The Evaluation Team collected field-based primary data in Israel between November 28 – December 16, 2018 through a total of 83 KIIs and FGDs representing a total of 173 individuals including migrants and absorption center staff. A total of eight absorption center sites were visited throughout Israel from a total of approximately 20 centers. The Evaluation Team systematically analyzed the qualitative data drawn from the interviews and focus groups using *Dedoose,* once each interview was transcribed and translated into English. The content analysis was accomplished through a coding system primarily based on the evaluation questions. Additional codes were added to illuminate unexpected findings.

The majority of the following recommendations are directed primarily at UIA/JAFI. Recommendations related to designing a more detailed and robust monitoring system, while migrants are within the absorption centers and as they build their lives in Israel, are geared to provide both the implementing agency and DOS/PRM an opportunity to better understand what happens to migrants. The following 15

recommendations are based on the findings of the evaluation team structured around the evaluation questions and contrasted with best practices outlined in the Desk Review completed before data collection.

## A. INTEGRATION INTO ISRAELI SOCIETY

*1. To what extent has the HMI program been successful in preparing migrants for long-term integration, including finding work and affordable housing?*

**1.1 Longterm Integration.** To be better informed about the extent of success in preparing migrants, it is recommended that UIA/JAFI put resources into collecting data on what happens after migrants leave the absorption center. Specific recommendations in this regard further explained under question 2.2.

**1.2 Language.** *Ulpan* (Hebrew language course) is provided by the Ministry of Education and appears to be effective for most migrants. Thus, no significant changes are recommended other than for the absorption centers to begin to integrate language scores with other data collected after migrants leave the absorption center. This would begin to show what final score is actually required for effective integration into the larger society.

**1.3 Language & the Elderly.** It might be helpful for absorption center educational staff to provide additional opportunities for elderly migrants to continue their language study past standard *Ulpan*. This could be as simple as bringing in Israelis for discussions or role-playing tasks that the elderly might have to undertake such as visits to the doctor.

**1.4 Preparation for Employment.** Access to professional training programs was found to a great need and gap in programming for Ethiopian migrants. In the current absorption centers that serve Ethiopian migrants, it is recommended to include at least two professional training courses aligned to the local market annually and the Taka program for those who wish to continue their university studies. For immigrants coming from Ethiopia, the program could place migrants in the currently offered professional training programs at other absorption centers according to the educational backgrounds required of each program. JAFI could also partner with a university or professional training provider to offer courses on the absorption centers' campus and work with the trainers to tailor to the needs of the Ethiopian communities.

**1.5 Preparation for Employment.** Absorption center staff could reduce barriers to participating in training courses by scheduling in the evening or at times when migrants are least likely to work. The need for migrants to work at least part-time during their absorption process will continue, but by scheduling around common work schedules, migrants will be able to improve their skills and opportunities for higher-wage employment.

**1.6 Preparation for Employment.** Staff responsible for supporting employment opportunities could create avenues for entrepreneurship by partnering with the Israel Small and Medium Enterprises Authority (ISMEA) at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, who offer training and services geared to new immigrants and in partnership with the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption. Host workshops at the absorption center and link migrants to their local Small Business Development Center (MATI, in Hebrew).

**Housing**. Given the situation in Israel, there is little that can be done by UIA/JAFI to improve the current experience around acquiring housing upon leaving the absorption centers. The amount of the Government of Israel grants provided to Ethiopian migrants is fixed and determined solely by the government. In the past, the grant covered the majority

of the cost of purchasing a house, however with housing cost increases and inflation, this is no longer true. Newer Ethiopian migrants continue to expect that the amount of the grant would be enough to purchase a house based on previous migrants' experience. This expectation could be moderated earlier before and upon arrival, so that migrants understand that they will need to earn a enough income through employment to pay for at least part of the mortgage. This reality could be made part of the initial introductions and reiterated whenever assistance related to housing is provided.

## B. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

*2.1 What adjustments to the HMI program would better prepare participants, particularly those living temporarily in absorption centers, for long-term integration?*

**2.1.1 Program Management.** The Employment Advisor plays an important and valuable function for the migrant population – particularly in regard to information about credentialing and degree conversions in the Israeli context. His or her services would be significantly enhanced – particularly for the higher-educated Ethiopian community - if provided with additional human resources support. Currently, there is one Employment Advisor to provide services for all the residents in the absorption centers. A scheme in which at least two additional advisors under his/her direction were engaged to serve a designated list of centers would ensure that a larger number of migrants could be provided with this critical support. The possibility of engaging interns to support the Employment Advisor's work, may help meet this need while mitigating budget constraints.

**2.1.2 Program Management.** In absorption centers where children's programs are not available and a need exists, educational staff could consider providing children's services at no charge to the parents and during training/study hours for parents. Where human and financial resources are scarce, engaging high school, university, and community volunteers can help bridge gaps and provide an enriching experience for both groups.

**2.1.3 Program Management.** It is recommended that more special programs for elderly migrants such as clubs, especially for Ethiopians, should be developed by absorption center staff. Even if these migrants remain in the absorption centers far past the standard program, efforts to provide useful activity is necessary. Given the issue of domestic disputes, perhaps a process for engaging the elderly as a resource to help resolve disputes could be part of the programs for the elderly. This would work well within the Ethiopian cultural context, given that elders commonly hold roles in Ethiopia related to household and community conflict prevention, resolution, and mediation.

*2.2 How can the UIA concretely measure integration success in language acquisition, employment, and self-reliance?*

**2.2.1 Measure success.** To better measure success, UIA/JAFI senior staff could provide resources (time and staff) to allow disparate data from the satisfaction survey (which is recommended to be collected from all migrants), the *Ulpan* language scores, and data already stored in JUMP (the name of the Salesforce data management system) to be centralized in JUMP and linked to specific migrants through unique identifiers. This would entail losing the anonymity factor of the satisfaction survey and should be analyzed if appropriate.

**2.2.2 Program Management.** Additional indicators related to employment including (1) job acquired while residing in absorption center and (2) efforts related to finding employment upon leaving center; and housing upon leaving the center including (1) source of housing information, (2) location, if known, and (3) type of housing; would be included in the performance monitoring system. Additional data entry fields for the above-mentioned indicators would need to be included in JUMP. The JAFI Strategy, Planning and Content Unit could assist in the development of a performance monitoring procedurals manual would need to be created in coordination with the Evaluation unit which outlines the specific times, roles, and responsibilities of staff in recording the information in JUMP.

The following actions are recommended to be completed by absorption center staff with assistance from the JAFI Strategy, Planning and Content Unit:

**2.2.3 Monitoring system.** To improve monitoring, the creation of a procedure for periodic contact and data collection on migrants who have left the absorption centers would be useful. It is recommended to establish specific periods for follow-up, such as one-year post-exit, three-years, and up to five years; as well as specific mechanisms for data collection (phone, in-person, online, or a combination). Record up-to-date contact information on each migrant in JUMP upon leaving the absorption center (and each time after) and acquire their consent for follow-up. Create a standardized survey to be applied during each follow-up activity and recorded directly in Salesforce, linked to the migrant. Use a representative sample-based approach to tracking migrants after their leave the center, to allow for a loss in contacts and save on resources while still speaking to particular population groups.

**2.2.4 Monitoring system.** To ensure the usability of the data collected, all absorption center staff should receive ongoing training in using JUMP and generating reports on individuals or trends in aggregate for their own and the center's use. The JAFI Strategy, Planning and Content Unit should share back data in aggregate in intermittent periods to highlight successes, learning opportunities, or challenges for staff to be aware of.

## C. BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK

*3.1 To what extent did beneficiaries report that the integration assistance provided by UIA and its partners was useful?*

**3.1.1 Access to information.** Access to information could be improved by maintaining a web presence for each absorption center. This could be accomplished through (1) the creation of websites on each absorption center linked to JAFI's homepage, and/or (2) the creation of Facebook pages maintained by absorption center staff. It would be helpful to translate materials included into multiple languages.

*3.2 How better can UIA and JAFI gather and incorporate into its programming beneficiary feedback?*

**3.2.1 Beneficiary Feedback**. Once the program has implemented a more consistent data collection process (from all migrants) and absorption center directors are more skilled at using the JUMP system, regular sharing of the data on what is happening at each center could become part of the regular directors' meetings.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE HUMANITARIAN MIGRANTS TO ISRAEL PROGRAM

The DOS/PRM supported HMI Program provides financial resources for the resettlement of humanitarian migrants from the FSU, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Near East and other countries of distress in Israel. The grant is implemented by the UIA through the JAFI who manage a network of absorption centers throughout the country. The program's goal is to integrate FSU and Ethiopian migrants into the larger Israeli society through Hebrew language acquisition, preparation for and entry into the workforce, and the attainment of permanent housing.

The following are the stated DOS/PRM objectives of the program:
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- **Objective 3:** To enable participants of Hebrew-language classes to successfully advance to a higher level.
- **Objective 4:** Post-high school students complete a nine-month program to prepare them for university level education or technological programs in Israel.

Program activities begin in the migrant's countries of origin and include, but are not limited to beginning language training, introductions to Israeli society, and guidance on the process of immigration. However, based on guidance from DOS/PRM, this evaluation will not assess these activities. After arrival in Israel, migrants either go directly into the larger community (direct absorption) or settle into one of twenty-one absorption centers located throughout Israel.

The major activity upon arrival in Israel is Hebrew language training (*Ulpan),* where participants begin or continue their study of Hebrew, required of all migrants to the country. *Ulpan* may take place at the absorption center or external centers near communities. The range of supporting activities may include the Global Center (phone assistance line), Yesodot ("Foundations", which focus on services for families with children), remedial tutoring such as Smart Tablet remedial math tutoring using software, afterschool study centers, prenatal courses such as Prihot, professional and vocational training (in the health field, information technology, naval skills, electrician, and tourism industry), and financial awareness. In addition, youth migrants may participate in programs such as: (1) Program 18+, a program supporting Ethiopian youth who might "fall through the cracks", (2) Horizons for Success, a technology and leadership program for Hebrew speaking Ethiopian youth and (3) *Selah*, a nine-month program that provides university preparation and care for unaccompanied minors who are high school graduates. Each JAFI-managed absorption center offers a different range of programming depending on the population it serves. Not all these programs are directly funded by PRM, but nevertheless play a role in the integration process.

Efforts to direct absorption center residents to permanent housing starts as soon as they arrive in Israel. The residents are notified upon arrival that the housing arrangement is temporary and after acquiring a house they will be assisted by the local municipality. Guidance from staff on housing includes instruction in acquiring a house/apartment and explanations regarding rent payment and supporting Ministry of Immigrant Absorption grants. Ethiopian families that prolong their stay for over two years are provided with additional assistance only in acute social welfare or medical cases. Elderly migrants generally move eventually into special housing for the elderly, referred to as *Amigour*. Most Ethiopian migrants move out of the absorption centers within two to three years, while there is a small group of long-term residents.

Within this context, the DOS/PRM HMI evaluation was commissioned in order to better understand and assess the effectiveness of the current practices of preparing and building the skills required for new

migrants from distressed countries – Ethiopia and the FSU – to transition out of absorption centers and integrate into larger Israeli society.

## III. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The primary audiences of the HMI Evaluation include DOS/PRM in its role as a funder of the program, as well as UIA and JAFI in their roles as implementers of the HMI program. DOS/PRM engaged Resonance (formerly SSG Advisors) to provide an Evaluation Team to determine the effectiveness of the services provided by UIA/JAFI on the integration of Ethiopian and FSU immigrants into Israeli society.

The evaluation's scope included identifying international best practices, specifying areas of opportunity for the program, and providing actionable recommendations geared towards improving the program. In addition, the scope also included the provision of recommendations around the overall management of the program, the indicators used by DOS/PRM to monitor the program, and the tools/mechanisms used by UIA/JAFI to respond to the indicators.

*HMI Evaluation Team*

The Evaluation Team included evaluation experts and subject matter experts from both the United States (U.S.) and Israel. Team members in Israel (from sub-contractor Management Sciences International provided deep knowledge of the migrant populations and native level language skills.

The Evaluation Team sought to answer the following evaluation questions and areas of analysis:

1. **Integration into Israeli Society:**
   a. To what extent has the HMI program been successful in preparing migrants for long-term integration, including finding work and affordable housing?
2. **Program Management:**
   a. What adjustments to the HMI program would better prepare participants, particularly those living temporarily in absorption centers, for long-term integration?
   b. How can the UIA concretely measure integration success in language acquisition, employment, and self-reliance?
3. **Beneficiary Feedback:**
   a. To what extent did beneficiaries report that the integration assistance provided by UIA and its partners was useful?
   b. How better can UIA and the JAFI gather and incorporate into its programming beneficiary feedback?

## IV. EVALUATION DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

### A. EVALUATION DESIGN

The HMI Evaluation used a mixed-methods design with a dominant qualitative approach, incorporating the use of three methods to collect primary and secondary data including (1) KIIs; (2) FGDs; and (3) Desk Reviews. To garner varied perspectives, the design included collecting data from absorption center staff, UIA/JAFI management staff, and current and past absorption center residents. While the staff to be interviewed were identified by their roles, the evaluation used a purposeful sampling strategy to identify the migrants to be interviewed whereby the Evaluation Team determined a set of criteria that would allow for a sufficiently differentiated sample to represent the wider migrant population (see Annex E). The criteria included (1) country of origin; (2) gender distribution; (3) long-term and short-term residents; (4) age; and (5) vulnerable groups (elderly, single parents, etc.).

As demonstrated by the Evaluation Design Matrix (EDM) in Annex C, each data collection method and source were identified to respond to one of the PRM-developed evaluation questions. The collected data was analyzed in *Dedoose*, a mixed methods content and thematic-analysis software, to produce aggregated findings and identify trends among themes. Dedoose allows for team members in both the U.S. and Israel to collaborate on the data analysis.
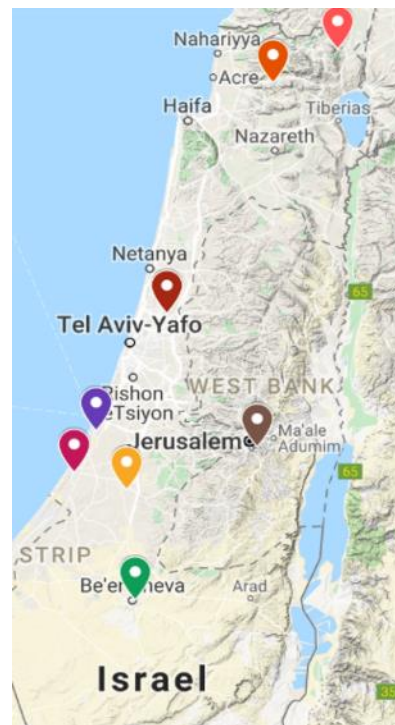
## B. EVALUATION METHODS

### *Data Collection*

The Evaluation Team collected field-based primary data in Israel between November 28 – December 16, 2018 through a total of 83 KIIs and FGDs representing a total of 173 individuals including migrants and absorption center staff (Annex A). A total of eight absorption center sites were visited throughout Israel from a total of approximately 21 centers[1], as demonstrated by the Exhibit 1, the evaluation itinerary in Annex D, and visuals from each center in Annex F.

KIIs and FGDs were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol to guide questioning and discussions. Each tool was developed for the targeted group, accounting for differences in experiences such as age or absorption experience. These included:

1) KII Guide for Absorption Center Staff;
2) KII Guide for Adult Absorption Center Resident;
3) KII Guide for Young Adult Absorption Center Resident;
4) KII Guide for Adult Direct Absorption, and;
5) FGD Guide for Absorption Center Residents.

The Evaluation Team designed the instruments to elicit information that would respond to the evaluation questions in the contract



***Exhibit 1:*** *Map of Centers Visited*

statement of work (see Annex G for the KII and FGD protocols). In each interview, the Evaluation Team secured verbal consent to use the information gathered in the evaluation report and provided assurances of respondent anonymity. Additionally, each interview or focus group was conducted in either Amharic, English, Hebrew, or Russian, depending on the respondents' comfort level and ability to express themselves in that language.

Absorption center staff were interviewed through individual KIIs, creating a private environment to ascertain honest impressions opinions regarding services for migrants given their knowledge of the community from their many years of experience. Migrants were interviewed both through KIIs and FGDs, given that each mechanism can provide a different environment and elicit different information useful to the evaluation that may not arise out of one method alone. Table 1 on the next page describes the number of KIIs and FGDs held along with the number of individuals reached through each mechanism.

**Table 1: Number of interviews by stakeholder and type**

|  | Ethiopian | FSU | Staff | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Key informant interview** | 21 | 22 | 24 | **63** |
| **KII group interview (2 people)** | 2 | 2 | 0 | **8** |
| **Focus group (4-10 people)*** | 7 | 5 | 0 | **12** |
| **Total** | **30** | **29** | **24** | **83** |

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[1] Absorption centers open and close based on the current influx of migrants, Israeli policy, and budget. JAFI usually manages approximately 20-22 centers.

*One group was as small as 4 people due to low turn-out.*

Additionally, the Evaluation Team held information sessions with eight absorption center directors (one per site), seven members of UIA/JAFI's leadership team, and one additional JAFI staff member (see Annex B) to better understand the current management structure, tools used to monitor program performance, and core services offered. These information sessions involved collecting additional documents to better understand each absorption centers' unique program offerings and where commonalities exist overall. While the data drawn from these interviews, focus groups, and information sessions form the core of evidence for findings, conclusions, and recommendations, the Evaluation Team supplemented and triangulated this evidence with information from secondary research acquired during the Desk Review.

### *Data Analysis*
The Evaluation Team systematically analyzed the qualitative data drawn from the interviews and focus groups using *Dedoose* once each interview was transcribed and translated into English. The content analysis was accomplished through a coding system primarily based on the evaluation questions. Additional codes were added to illuminate unexpected findings. Each KII and FGD transcript was read and analyzed by at least two Evaluation Team members – a primary coder and a reviewer.

## C. LIMITATIONS
In the interest of accountability and transparency, it's important to note several limitations regarding the data and evaluation process:

- Given the decentralized nature of data management at each absorption center and the limited data available on past participants, consistent contact information could not be identified to conduct the Past Participant Survey (included in Annex G) as planned in the Evaluation Workplan.
- The KIIs and FGDs were organized as semi-structured, meaning that it wasn't always possible to quantify against total numbers of interviews due to the relevance of themes to the full population.
- The KIIs and FGDs were conducted in four different languages including Amharic, English, Hebrew and Russian. Each interview was subsequently transcribed and translated. Data that is translated can be subject to translation errors that may skew findings. In order to ensure confidence in the translations, the Evaluation Team also checked the translation to ensure their validity.
- The Evaluation Team did not have full control over the selection of interview participants and relied on JAFI and absorption center staff to organize the participants prior to arrival. This may have led to some degree of selection bias. However, the Evaluation Team worked with JAFI early on to mitigate this issue by defining the characteristics of participants needing to be interviewed (Annex E). Given the wide array of perspectives and viewpoints, the Evaluation Team is confident that the data collected has resulted in a solid base of evidence from which to develop useful findings and conclusions.

# V. DATA AND FINDINGS

## A. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

As explained in the sampling strategy (Annex E), the HMI Evaluation sought to interview enough residents



**EXHIBIT 2: RESPONDENT POPULATION**

- Ethiopian — 48%
- FSU — 22%
- FSU youth (Selah) — 12%
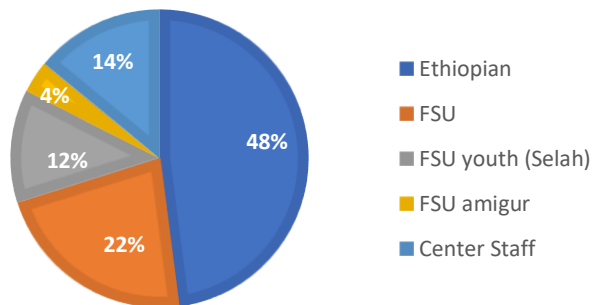- FSU amigur — 4%
- Center Staff — 14%

and staff with diverse characteristics that allowed for an accurate assessment of the program. The evaluation team interviewed a total of 173 individuals, of which 24 were absorption center staff. Exhibit 2 demonstrates the breakdown of the individuals interviewed.

While FSU migrants make up 39% of the total population interviewed, the responses of FSU migrants going through the *Selah* program and migrants living at the *Amigur* public housing for the elderly were analyzed separately due to the differences in their experiences as compared to the residents of the absorption

centers. The evaluation managed to reach an equitable female to male ratio, with 51% females and 49% males. Most FSU respondents were newer residents at the absorption center, residing under 12 months. In comparison, the Ethiopian respondents were more varied with most having resided at the absorption center

more than 36 months. A small number of Ethiopians interviewed had in fact already moved out of an absorption center, Exhibit 3 includes the length of time these individuals also resided at their center. The variation in length of stay between origins is consistent with overall JAFI residence trends, which state 74% of Ethiopian migrants tend to leave absorption centers within 25-36 months while FSU migrants tend to be absorbed quickly[2].

In addition, several of the FSU migrants participated in programs that were either in their beginning stages, as was the case with the physician's program at Shvi Tzion, or were short in duration, as is the case with the *Selah* program



**EXHIBIT 3: RESIDENCE BY LENGTH AND ORIGIN**

at Carmiel. Respondents were relatively equal in number across each absorption center with the exception of Barnea, in Ashkelon, due to it being the only absorption center visited that hosted both Ethiopian and FSU migrants as can be seen in Table 2 on next page.

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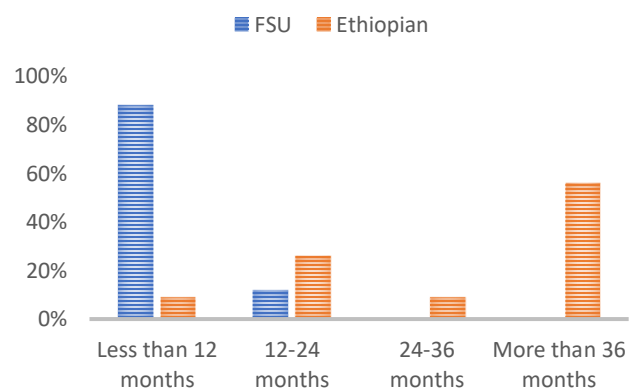
[2] 2018 HMI Program Report to DOS/PRM; no statistic available for FSU migrants' length of stay at absorption centers.

**Table 2: Population reached in each absorption center**

| Absorption Center | FSU | Ethiopian | Center Staff |
|---|---|---|---|
| Barnea, Ashkelon | 15 | 12 | 5 |
| Carmiel | 24 | - | 2 |
| Haruv, Beer Sheva | - | 22 | 4 |
| Kfar Saba, Amigur | 6 | - | 2 |
| Meron, Tzfat | - | 24 | 3 |
| Shiv Tzion, Ashdod | 13 | - | 1 |
| Shoshana, Kiryat Gat | - | 26 | 4 |
| Ulpan Etzion, Jerusalem | 7 | - | 3 |
| *Total* | *66* | *84* | *24* |

While the evaluation was not meant to provide a statistically representative sample of absorption center residents, it represents a set of perspectives that are similar to the makeup of the HMI Program participants. The Ethiopian-serving absorption centers had larger turnouts for the focus groups discussions with groups ranging up to ten individuals. Meanwhile the FSU-serving absorption centers had a lower turn-out for the focus groups with the smallest group including four participants. Despite the diversity and in full acknowledgement that each absorption center is unique in its characteristics and programming, certain trends and similarities emerged from the data collected which are further explored in the following sections.

## B. INTEGRATION INTO ISRAELI SOCIETY

*1.1 To what extent has the HMI program been successful in preparing migrants for long-term integration, including finding work and affordable housing?*

### Longterm Integration

The review of best practices indicated that integration of migrants into the larger society is a process that involves a complex mix of cultural, economic, and social factors. The HMI Program seeks to prepare migrants through support in the areas of (1) language acquisition, (2) identification of permanent housing, and (3) employment. There is a difficulty in determining the extent of integration of migrants who have transitioned out of the absorption centers due to limited access during the evaluation of these individuals and lack of a strong tracking system to contact them. Thus, longterm integration for the purposes of the evaluation was assessed through current residents' likelihood of integrating based on their ability to meet the three criteria previously mentioned and their perspectives.

> **Quote 1: Perspective on Integration**
> *"This was my first home. It paved my way into Israel. To the educated and uneducated alike, the absorption center has been the way we integrated into the Israel society. The hard work and sacrifice the staff has gone through for us, and in general the absorption center has a remarkable impact on Ethiopian Jewish immigrants. For me, I have great memories here…They helped me find the work I'm still working at 10 years later".*
>
> **Adult Ethiopian Migrant**

Thirty-four of the individuals spoken to report a positive perspective on their ability to integrate as a result of absorption center services while only three reported a negative perspective. Of the few individuals interviewed who had left the absorption centers, they generally reported that they had been well prepared, as illustrated by Quote 1. Absorption center staff commented that they had frequent contact with former absorption center residents who return to absorption centers to report that they are happily integrated. At the same time, staff admitted that they did not necessarily hear from those who were struggling. A number of individuals still living in the absorption centers past the standard two

> **Exhibit 4: Migrants Unable to Integrate**
> There is a group of Ethiopian migrant men, who for various reasons such as divorce, accusations of domestic violence, and illness who were "left behind" in the absorption centers with little chance of ever moving out into the community. Most of these men were waiting for *Amigur* public housing for many years.
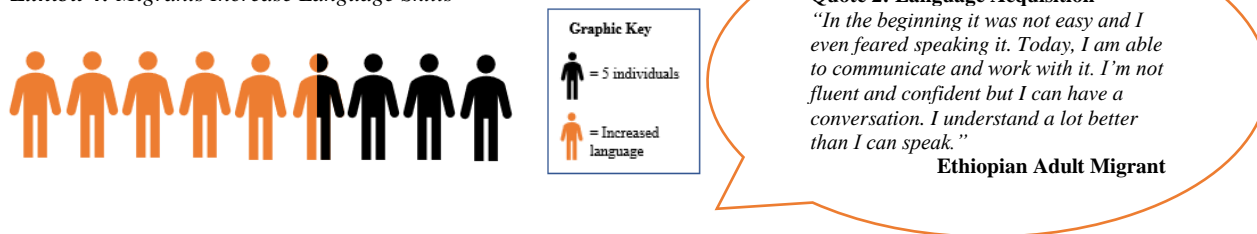
years, reported feeling that they were not capable of living independently. These individuals tended to be Ethiopian rather than FSU and elderly or individuals who had suffered domestic disruptions. They mention factors around all three foci of the program including limited language skills which were unlikely to improve, housing that was too expensive to buy even with government support, or their employment prospects are too poor (type of employment or ability to acquire employment) to afford moving out. Absorption center staff continue to support them and search for solutions that will allow them to move out. Some remain in the absorption centers for as long as 10 years.

### Language

Language acquisition is critical to longterm integration. Most migrants, both FSU and Ethiopian, were positive about language training provided at the absorption centers. *Ulpan* was seen as helpful and the instructors both skilled and kind. In 27 of 45 KIIs, migrants expressed that they had increased their Hebrew language abilities. Migrants from the FSU reported increasing language at a higher rate than migrants from Ethiopian migrants. Even those that ended *Ulpan* with basic skills were confident in improving sufficiently for integration. The chance to practice language skills while working outside of the absorption center was seen as important to becoming self-reliant. This meets the standards suggested by integration processes in other countries.

**Exhibit 4:** *Migrants Increase Language Skills*



Graphic Key

= 5 individuals

= Increased language

**Quote 2: Language Acquisition**
*"In the beginning it was not easy and I even feared speaking it. Today, I am able to communicate and work with it. I'm not fluent and confident but I can have a conversation. I understand a lot better than I can speak."*
**Ethiopian Adult Migrant**

The exception to this were several elderly Ethiopian migrants who expressed concern about their ability to communicate with others outside their group and in accomplishing tasks outside the absorption center (Quote 3).

**Quote 3: Hebrew for the Elderly**
*"Unfortunately, we both don't speak the language. At our age it has been difficult in learning Hebrew. I feel like what they taught us in class stayed in class."*
**Elderly Ethiopian Migrant**

Best practices identified in studies of literacy for adult language learners suggest that classes be segregated and adapted to individual age group. This is generally the case unless there are limited differentiated numbers, then separate classes were not possible.

### Housing

Absorption center staff provide extensive assistance to help migrants find housing for when they are ready to transition to permanent housing. This includes identifying available housing in the area or information on other cities, bringing in realtors or lawyers, translating contracts, working with government agencies to get grants entitled to migrants (a very complicated process). The Ethiopian community cites getting a significant amount of support from staff with regards to finding housing, while FSU community also consult other sources. FSU migrants move into rental apartments or with family and do not seem to be daunted by the costs. Fourteen FSU adult migrants indicated that they planned to move into a rental upon completion of the program, compared to just 1 Ethiopian migrant as illustrated in Quote 4. The remaining

**Quote 4: Attitudes About Moving**
*"We will rent,of course. I think we can think about buying only when I get on my own feet professionally and will have a good income. When both of us will work. For now, we're planning to rent something cheap. With 3 children you use so much water plus the rent. It's alot to pay.***" Adult FSU Migrant**
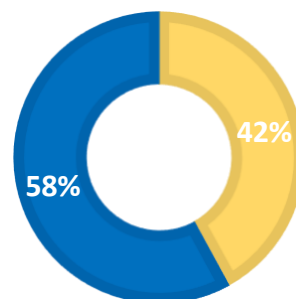
migrants were not yet able to plan their housing based on their tenure in their program or not being ready to leave to the absorption center.

**EXHIBIT 5: CONCERNS OVER HOUSING**



42%

58%

■ Concern over Housing Affordability ■ No mention of Concern

Ethiopians are generally concerned about their ability to afford housing. Concern over affordability was mentioned 24 times by Ethiopian migrants versus four times by FSU migrants and 42% of all interviews raised the housing affordability issue. This seems to be due to a combination of factors such as smaller families (thus smaller grants) and higher housing prices. Ethiopians are also restricted to using the grant outside of areas already densely populated by Ethiopians which may affect affordability. Ethiopian migrants have the expectation that the grant (which has not been increased in years) will completely cover the cost of a house.

**Preparation for Employment** (including training and education)
During the first few months of the absorption process, it is generally recommended by absorption center staff that migrants focus on their Hebrew language studies and initial integration before pursuing employment. However, as noted in Quote 6, most migrants felt that they needed to work immediately in order to save to eventually buy or rent a house or apartment.

The jobs obtained by migrants while living at absorption centers are usually considered short-term and are generally low-paying. FSU migrants tended to acquire jobs at shops, bars, as caregivers, or restaurants. Meanwhile, out of 12 Ethiopian migrants who are currently working at their respective centers, nine of them do so in factories (Exhibit 6). Residents of Meron (which is in a more remote area) were least likely to be working while at the center, despite expressing a desire to work. As one absorption staff member explained, the job market in Tzfat is lagging and there are limited opportunities even for the current residents of Tzfat.

*Exhibit 6: Ethiopian Migrants in Factory Jobs*



Graphic Key
= 1 working individual
= Working in a factory

As a part of the preparation of migrants for short-term and long-term employment, the absorption centers offer employment readiness workshops and JAFI-preparation programs. These sponsored professional training or academic workshops include topics such job-searching, resume writing, interviewing techniques, and information regarding workers' rights. Regarding professional training, the absorption centers offer training in topics

including computer programming and caregiving. The evaluation team visited seven of these programs at different absorption centers (see Annex H for a description of each). In addition, JAFI provides support to individuals through the services of an Employment Advisor, tasked to provide to migrants (1) advice on employment options in Israel; (2) advice on converting foreign degrees to the Israeli job market; and (3) advice around Israeli licensing. At the same time, the Employment Advisor supports the absorption centers generally by creating relationships with companies and company associations across the country to engage with the centers nearest to those locations. The current list has more than 400 listings across the country, including associations representing more than 6,000 businesses.

Of the migrants interviewed for this evaluation, only two Ethiopians were found to be participating in a professional training program compared to 23 FSU migrants. The FSU migrants were all participating in one of the programs highlighted in Annex H (*Selah* excluded from these counts) while the two Ethiopian migrants participated in trainings sponsored by other organizations. One of them took a cooking course found on their own, while the other participated in a course on bathroom installations referred to by an absorption staff member. In contrast, the Ethiopians interviewed for this study felt a strong desire and need for more professional training courses to enhance their skills for the Israeli market. The need for professional training was mentioned at least 16 times by different Ethiopian migrants and seven times by absorption center staff that serve the Ethiopian migrant community. Meanwhile, it was mentioned only once by a migrant from the FSU who wasn't currently participating in a training program.

> **Quote 7: Migrant Education Levels**
> *"The last immigration was 2015, and they're very enthusiastic. Then last year - that group is amazing.Most of them have an education, except for not having a certificate, they studied. In the 2015 immigration we also had a few immigrants who came with certification and some had 10 or 11 years of schooling."***Absorption Center Staff**

Ethiopian migrants are coming into Israel with higher education credentials than in past waves of migration from the country, as eight different staff members serving the Ethiopian community explained to the Evaluation Team. Where in the past, Ethiopian migrants had been arriving to Israel with limited education, the demographic characteristics have changed over the years as described in Quote 7. Among the Ethiopian population consulted for this evaluation, at least 20% had a higher-education degree obtained prior to migrating to Israel. These included degrees in natural resource management, accounting, teaching, nursing, pharmacy, information technology, among others. However, these individuals also indicated not knowing how to or if they were eligible to transfer their credentials for use in Israel, or how to use their credentials

> **Quote 8: Educated Ethiopian Migrant Jobs**
> *"I work in a factory and the work is hard. It's a disturbing feeling that coming from Ethiopia being educated and ending up working in factory cleaning. We dreamt of coming here and improving our lives but end up in work that puts us down. Maybe it's just my feeling but at work we are seen as these Ethiopians immigrants that don't know much."*
> **Adult Ethiopian Migrant**

to obtain additional training or preparation to become qualified for their professions in the Israeli context. As a result, many of them work in factories or in low-skilled, low-wage jobs (Quote 8).

The FSU interviewees described the jobs they acquired explicitly as temporary to support them or their families while finishing their respective program. In contrast, while the Ethiopian interviewees may have begun with a temporary job, all of those who had been at the absorption center for more than 36 months continued to work in the same low-skill job or a similar position at another company. Tied to the need of additional training, Quote 9 shows how Ethiopian

> **Quote 9: Training and Education Needs**
> *"I hope that there is a way I can go to school, I have a high school diploma from Ethiopia. Before I made Aliyah I had started a building construction diploma but I didn't finish. My educational credentials don't mean much here in Israel. So for young people like myself it doesn't make sense that we end up doing hard labor instead we should have the chance of going to school and improving ourselves."*
> **Adult Ethiopian Migrant**

migrants express the degree to which furthering their education is important to them to both improve themselves and their future job prospects.

The absorption center staff who serve the Ethiopian migrant community echoed the need for additional training or continuing education reflecting that this was one of the community's largest barriers to integration. Not being able to convert degrees for those with education credentials, coupled with limited offerings for professional or academic preparation programs, tends to result in migrants who have a harder time obtaining a higher-wage job (Quote 10). This sentiment was reflected again and separately by the Employment Advisor.

> **Quote 10: Migrants' Need for Professional Training**
> *"We see that what happens is that whoever does not have a profession or training, goes to work in general work such as cleaning and such. Not that there is anything wrong with working as a janitor, but it can't be that everyone would go in that direction. So, if you would ask me, what can we change? I would say: to give them another year, to give them occupational training and equip them with a profession, such as a kindergarten teacher assistant, or cashier, and other jobs, so that they can integrate into more mainstream society, not just as cleaning manpower."*
> **Abortpion Center Staff Member**

## C. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

*2.1 What adjustments to the HMI program would better prepare participants, particularly those living temporarily in absorption centers, for long-term integration?*

### Longterm Integration

The level of dedication of absorption center staff to the migrants within their care is undeniable. All staff interviewed reported that they did the job because they were dedicated to mission of integration and supporting migrants. The majority worked in the field of migrant integration for ten or more years. Their assistance in all the areas of life is essential to smoothing the process of integration and ranges from explaining electrical appliances to guiding migrants through the intricate process of purchasing a home or dealing with bureaucracy. Changing budget issues are an ongoing challenge for staff who are trying to meet needs with less funding or human resources to attend to the wide array of new migrant needs. The long-term staff reported that on the one hand, programs had not changed for many years and, on the other hand, they tried to adjust as new issues arose. Employment trends, such as the increase in high tech jobs has resulted in new training programs, particularly FSU young adults. Ethiopian migrants did not seem to be included in these types of new programs. As social problems have arisen with particular segments of the Ethiopian community, such as domestic violence and conflict with police, absorption centers have attempted to provide additional support in the form of trainings in Israeli standards for domestic issues and meetings with police to discuss how to deal with judicial issues.

### Children's Programs

Both FSU and Ethiopian migrants shared a high degree of satisfaction and usefulness of the programs offered to their children in the center. Among the 15 comments made by migrants about the children's programs, 100% were positive reporting that the programs provided important childcare functions that allowed their parents to work or study as well as provided enrichment activities to help the children better integrate into the Israeli school system as demonstrated by Quote 11.

> **Quote 11: Impressions of Children's Programs**
> *"You can send the schoolchildren and preschoolers to the Club after the school, and not to worry, and to know that they'd be looked after until 4 o'clock, some even do their homework there. Not everybody is able to pay for the day care center at the school. It's especially important for people when they start attending the lectures at the Kaplan Hospital. They come back from the lectures and need to study, some also work. It's a big advantage that the management provides this service and for free."*
> **Adult FSU Migrant**

**Elderly Programs**

Clubs for elderly migrants were available in several, but not all absorption centers. These clubs provided outings and activities for the residents of those absorption centers.

*2.2 How can the UIA concretely measure integration success in language acquisition, employment, and self-reliance?*

An extensive satisfaction survey is completed for FSU migrants on arrival in the country. No such data is gathered on Ethiopian migrants. This survey focuses on services provided in the country of origin. There is no equivalent effort to collect data at other points in the program nor after migrants leave the absorption centers. Current efforts to measure success is limited to review of language level at the end of *Ulpan*. There is a general belief that a high alef level (beginner) is sufficient for allowing the migrant, with additional practice speaking, to live and work outside of the absorption center. This belief was supported only by impressions of absorption center staff. An evaluation of the integration of Ethiopian migrants was undertaken in 2012. This provided useful information regarding their experience in the absorption centers and eventual movement into the larger society. No such data collection effort has been undertaken in the intervening years, primarily due to lack of human and financial resources.

As was described in the *Monitoring Tools Report* (approved by DOS/PRM on January 22, 2019 and in Annex I), each absorption center manages its own information in various formats and there is a lack of common overall monitoring tools. The Evaluation Team uncovered that the centers gather information to report on the established performance monitoring indicators in the following ways:

1. **Migrant satisfaction with services received:** Survey administered to recently arrived FSU migrants which asks generally about the services they received in their home countries and immediately after arrival. The survey can be reviewed in Annex L.
2. **Migrants' transition time to permanent housing:** This is captured in JAFI's Salesforce system called "JUMP" and is further described in the Annex I. Only the date of leaving the absorption center is captured. The nature of the housing acquired (purchasing vs. renting vs. other) is not documented.
3. **Migrants' Hebrew language acquisition:** Language scores are assessed and managed by the Ministry of Education. The absorption centers receive reports from the Ministry which are then stored separately and not linked to other data.
4. **Post-high school student completion of Selah:** This is captured in JUMP in the same way that migrants' leaving absorption centers is captured and in physical files that are not transferred online.

The Salesforce-based system JUMP is a powerful tool for tracking and managing information on migrants, it is currently configured primarily for placing migrants at an absorption center and ultimately, checking them out once they move into a rental or purchase housing. No other intermittent data on language, job acquisition, feedback, or type of housing is captured. JUMP is also not regularly used by all staff at the absorption centers due to lack of knowledge of the platform or comfort in its use. Staff that do use JUMP often have a difficult time generating and exporting analysis reports. In addition, JAFI does not have a mandate around follow-up, tracking, or conducting a

survey once residents leave the center

and move into permanent housing. Current follow-up activities tend to be ad-hoc and rely on an existing relationship with staff. In 2016, UIA/JAFI absorption center staff organized an internal evaluation that conducted follow-up on 64 Ethiopian migrants that had moved into permanent housing. This study, while mentioned as very useful by some directors, was of a small non-random sample with open ended questions and was administered by absorption center staff. One absorption center staff noted the importance of the study during the fieldwork unprompted, sharing the learning that came out of it (Quote 13- previous page). As a result of this study, staff in at least one Ethiopian-serving absorption center made more of a more concerted effort to document the permanent residences of migrants who leave the center and housemothers periodically conducted follow-up visits on an ad-hoc basis.

## D. BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK

*3.1 To what extent did beneficiaries report that the integration assistance provided by UIA and its partners was useful?*

### Overall Satisfaction

Migrants were universally positive about the support provided by the staff at all the absorption centers (Quote 14), with the exception of a small group of Ethiopian migrants who experienced personal problems as explained previously in Exhibit 4. While there were some comments about the quality of the physical environment, such as need for air conditioners or new paint, overall migrants were either happy with accommodations or understood the limitations and were satisfied with the accommodations given that they were short-term.

> **Quote 14: Migrant Perspectives on Center Staff**
> *"I'm so grateful that we could live here "under a protective wing". Whenever we had questions, we could always ask someone from the staff. It's scary even to think how our life would have been if we started out in a rented apartment. And we, at least, have family in the country. But there're people here with no family at all. So we only freel the gratitude for the center where we could live and get so much help. If they could only have more staff, because there're such long lines to talk to [them]. There're so many of us and so few of them."*
> **Adult FSU Migrant**

### Access to Information on Absorption Centers

The interviewees were prompted to share their early impressions of Israel and the absorption process upon arrival. As mentioned previously, residents were generally satisfied with their arrival process and the staff's support at each absorption center. In the 2016 satisfaction survey, 95% of surveyed FSU migrants were satisfied with the treatment they received; only 5% expressed dissatisfaction. While there was overall satisfaction, migrants expressed that they would have been better prepared for the experience in-country if they knew more information about the city they were going to and details about the center. Between Ethiopian and FSU migrants, this was a particular issue of discussion for FSU migrants – referenced at least 35 times in the KIIs and FGDs as opposed to just 6 times by the Ethiopian migrants. As can be seen in Quote 15, information shared about the city they will repatriate to and the absorption center is done in a very personalized way, relying on the knowledge of individual staff (*shaliach*) stationed in the migrants' home countries. Migrants cited they also conducted internet research to complement the information given but that little could be found on the absorption center itself. In one FGD, migrants referenced the utility of a YouTube video created by a previous resident. They stated that the video gave them the best sense of what the center and city looked like, and what they needed to be prepared for upon arrival.

> **Quote 15: Impressions on Information**
> *"We were shown photos of the absorption center for new immigrants, where we will live in Israel. In these photos were a general view of the center and a view of the corridors. We could not see how our rooms looked from these photos. Still in Ukraine they told us in which city we will live in Israel. When we learned about the name of the city where we will in Israel. Then through the internet we found more information about this city."*
> **Adult FSU Migrant**

*3.2 How better can UIA and JAFI gather and incorporate into its programming beneficiary feedback?*

The collection of information on migrants' perspectives is currently limited to ad hoc data collection at each absorption center. Absorption center directors appeared to keep close attention to what was happening in the absorption centers and attempted to be as quickly responsive as possible to issues as they arose. Directors share information across absorption centers at regular meetings. Information flows to senior UIA/JAFI staff happens periodically. Currently, the JAFI Strategy, Planning and Content Unit is engaged in upgrading their process of collecting and using data on each component of UIA/JAFI programming, but this process has not yet included the programs implemented at absorption centers.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

### A. INTEGRATION INTO ISRAELI SOCIETY

*1.1 To what extent has the HMI program been successful in preparing migrants for long-term integration, including finding work and affordable housing?*

**Longterm Integration**
The overall conclusion from interviews and focus groups is that, with the exception of elderly migrants and those with severe health or domestic issues, the absorption center programs are successful in preparing migrants for their new life in Israel. Upon leaving the absorption centers, most have basic language skills, some type of employment (quality of said employment aside), and some type of independent housing (either rental or permanent). All these three areas are challenging, but most migrants can meet these challenges given support by the staff and sufficient time to adjust to the complete change in lifestyle.

One area of concern is the longterm prospects of elderly Ethiopians, in particular. While living in the absorption centers, they are particularly subject to a feeling of dislocation and lack of a role to play in the community. Their expressions of feelings of boredom and dissatisfaction with their position indicate a need to make additional efforts to engage them in useful activities. In the absorption centers where there were elderly clubs, the elderly seemed more content. Moving the elderly, both FSU and Ethiopians, out of absorption centers is an issue not entirely within the control of the absorption centers. Space in public housing is limited and unlikely to expand significantly enough to address needs.

**Language**
Language acquisition was clearly easiest for younger migrants. For the younger migrants, *Ulpan* provided the basis that they needed for either beginning Hebrew or for advancing their language skills. Their skills improved significantly after time in the workforce. That being said, it is impossible to determine whether the degree to which *Ulpan* scores reflect the ability to go on to real integration. The elderly migrants struggled and may benefit from additional opportunities at a slower pace geared to their specific needs.

**Housing**
Finding employment and finding housing are intertwined as having access to only lower paying jobs makes finding housing in a preferred area much more difficult, even with a government grant. The employment of the majority of Ethiopians in unskilled jobs along with increasing housing costs in most major urban areas of Israel is a major constraint for meeting housing needs for this population in particular.

**Preparation for Employment**
Both FSU migrants and Ethiopian migrants have a desire and need to work while living at the absorption center, despite that it might interfere with language or other studies, due to financial

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constraints and a wish to save money for housing. FSU migrants have greater chances than Ethiopian migrants of obtaining a well-paid quality position or pursuing additional higher education shortly after they finish their absorption process due to the fact that most are participating in a professional or academic training program. In contrast, Ethiopian migrants have limited options for professional training and a strong expressed desire to continue education or training with the purpose of obtaining quality employment. As it stands, Ethiopian migrants tend to obtain low-wage, low-skilled jobs that hamper their ability to afford housing presently or in the future. This in turn affects the length of time that Ethiopian migrants reside in absorption centers, due to housing affordability and need to save.

At the same time, the educational background of Ethiopian migrants has changed over the years with many higher-educated individuals migrating to Israel. These migrants have little information on how to convert degrees to the Israeli context, supplement them with additional academic preparations if the degree can't be transferred, or pursue higher education. They represent an untapped segment of human capital potential who may become frustrated and struggle to become fully integrated as expectations are not fulfilled. As higher educated migrants, they may also not require the 10-month *Ulpan* program designed for Ethiopian migrants with a lower educational background as it may be a slower pace than their learning style requires.

**Separated Families**

Against the backdrop of the integration process, an important and passionate issue was raised in each of the seven FGDs and seven of 23 KIIs with Ethiopian migrants. The Israeli government through the Ministry of Absorption decides on the number of migrants that are brought in from countries of distress on a yearly basis. Ethiopian families are often waiting anywhere between 10 to 20 years to immigrate to Israel in camp-like settings in city centers of Addis Ababa and Gondor. Once the opportunity arrives for a member of the family to immigrate, they often approve the immigration of a few members of the family for reasons including health, application date, closeness of relatives residing in Israel among other things. As families grow while waiting to immigrate to Israel and each applicant must provide proof of his or her Jewish heritage separately, not all family members are approved at the same time. The approved family members leave Ethiopia with the hope that their families are close behind. Unfortunately, this has not been the case for many of the Ethiopian migrants and has caused undue stress, sorrow, and complications. For elderly migrants who are approved on their own, this presents an additional layer of problems in that there is no family or caretaker at the absorption center upon arrival to care for them. The quote below is illustrative of their feelings.

> **Quote 16: Perspectives on Separated Families**
> *"My aunts and uncles are still in Ethiopia. I have 6 families still waiting in Gondar city to immigrate to Israel. Despite that I am leading a good life here my constant thought and fear is for my family members separated from me and stranded in Gondar city. We send money to help them out of the small income we have but it doesn't make a change in their life or ours."*
>
> **Adult Ethiopian Migrant**

Finally, this context can also affect migrants' general integration. By sending money back home that they would've otherwise saved coupled with earning a low income, could ultimately affect the length of time they reside in absorption centers and hinder their integration process.

## B. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

*2.1 What adjustments to the HMI program would better prepare participants, particularly those living temporarily in absorption centers, for long-term integration?*

The components of the HMI Program, in particular housing preparation, Hebrew language courses, and general assistance provided by the absorption center staff doesn't require major adjustments. The professional training programs and academic preparation programs are well regarded among those migrants who have access to them. However, there is a great need to either open the professional training programs

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to the Ethiopian community (for those with the right qualifications) and/or add professional, vocational, and academic preparation programs to the Ethiopian-serving absorption centers. Minor changes are also required in terms of access to information on the absorption centers for all migrant groups (recommendations provided in the following section) and activities for elderly migrants.

In addition, the mandate of the JAFI Employment Advisor is vast. In his own words "I can reach maybe 10,000 migrants in a year – but we have almost 30,000, I cannot reach all of them." This contact may be simply an email or a more in-depth advisory process. The Advisor has also expressed a strong desire to conduct follow-up work, but limited time to do so. While he feels like he is making a difference, his ability to provide in-depth support is hampered by there only being one individual in this function.

### Children's Programs

Children's programs provide a much-needed resource for migrant parents to study or work in preparation of their integration to Israel. In addition, children of migrants are going through their own integration process often at schools with limited programming to suit their needs or that is vastly different from their own experience. The programs help provide enrichment to support children in their own integration process and cope with issues arriving out of big transitions. When resources are limited for migrants, activities that provide enrichment while providing childcare are invaluable for the full family. Both Ethiopian and FSU migrants reported a high degree of satisfaction and gratitude for these services.

### Elderly Programs

The programs for the elderly are necessary to address the dislocation and strain that comes from losing their traditional role in society. The programs such as elderly clubs that currently exist in some of the absorption centers provide an excellent model for expanding this type of program.

*2.2 How can the UIA concretely measure integration success in language acquisition, employment, and self-reliance?*

Except for language skills, no consistent measurement of the degree to which migrants are successfully integrating is taking place. Even with language, the staff only know about level reached and not the individuals' actual capacity to integrate. Effective measurement of performance is accomplished through effective data collection and storage processes that are well integrated into each staff's scope of work. As it stands, HMI performance measurement can be done on current indicators discretely, but challenges arise when it comes to disaggregation, triangulation, and further analysis. The three indicators on adult migrant experiences are not currently stored in any one system linked to migrant experiences. Moreover, the program has the potential to include additional performance indicators important to integration – including employment status and housing.

Outcome monitoring is an important source for program learning and adaptive management. Moreover, integration and self-reliance success can only truly be measured after a migrant has left the absorption center for a given length of time. A participants' perception changes about the integration support received once they've left the program and can give constructive feedback on the activities most and least useful to their lives outside of the center. In order to achieve this, a follow-up standard procedure and related survey would be beneficial to understand post-program outcomes among migrants at different intervals of time.

### C. BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK
*3.1 To what extent did beneficiaries report that the integration assistance provided by UIA and its partners was useful?*

Migrants are generally positive about the assistance provided and feel that their concerns are heard by staff at the absorption centers. The initial support provided by staff (personal contact, supplies in apartment) are highly regarded and rated. As can be seen in Exhibit 7, of all the themes that came out of the KIIs and FGDs, the migrants' opinions of the staff were the most top-of-mind.

***Exhibit 7:*** *Common Emerging Themes*



**Access to Information**

Arriving to a new country with the intention to stay permanently can be a stressful process for any person. While it was clear that ongoing support and information while in Israel is well provided by the absorption center staff, there is opportunity to improve migrants' access to information pre-arrival. FSU migrants tended to express this need at a greater rate than Ethiopian migrants. They felt that access to more comprehensive information would have allowed them to have more realistic expectations, be better prepared, and make informed choices. While the personalized touch of an individual staff member in the origin country is useful and important to answer questions, the migrants are eligible to participate in more than 20 centers managed by JAFI, which would be a challenging wealth of knowledge for any one individual.

*3.2 How better can UIA and JAFI gather and incorporate into its programming beneficiary feedback?*

Better information on the program overall is needed. Currently, program wide perspectives are lacking except on an impressionistic level. An effort to create a monitoring system is required in order to understand nuances both within absorption centers and across them.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the following recommendations are directed primarily at UIA/JAFI. It is hoped the DOS/PRM will see that these recommendations will go far to move the program further in the direction of the Bureau goals and strategy. Recommendations related to designing a more detailed and robust monitoring system and data collection system while migrants are within the absorption centers and as they build their lives in Israel upon leaving the center, are geared to provide real-time information and understanding of migrant trajectories for both the implementing agency and DOS/PRM.

For DOS/PRM, it is recommended that field visits include a review of UIA/JAFI's progress in building out a more robust monitoring system and implementing procedures for outcome monitoring as is described in recommendations 2.2.1 – 2.2.4 and the *Monitoring Tools Report*. In order for DOS/PRM to effectively monitor this during field visits, it is recommended that the following items are reviewed:

(1) Have the additional modules for monitoring while in the center been updated in JUMP?
(2) Are there procedures in place and clear roles and responsibilities for different absorption center staff around updating JUMP?
(3) Do absorption center staff feel comfortable using JUMP and running reports on the residents of their center?
(4) Has a procedure and/or a policy been developed around follow-up and resources allocated to conducting follow-up surveys with residents who have left the absorption center?

It would be beneficial for PRM staff to talk to individuals within the JAFI Strategy, Planning and Content Unit to discuss how these improvements are being supported in the agency as a whole.

Given the demographic characteristics change of the Ethiopian migrant community, it is also recommended that PRM adjust their description of the current situation in the HMI grant proposal to reflect this.

There are a total of 15 actionable recommendations, numbered by evaluation question as can be viewed below for programming adjustments. Each relates to a different theme as presented throughout this report.

## A. INTEGRATION INTO ISRAELI SOCIETY

1. *To what extent has the HMI program been successful in preparing migrants for long-term integration, including finding work and affordable housing?*

**Longterm Integration**

**1.1** Without more accurate data about what happens to migrants after they leave the absorption center, it is difficult to determine how any overall changes to the program will influence successful integration. To be better informed about the extent of success in preparing migrants, our team recommends that UIA/JAFI put resources into regularly collecting data on what happens after migrants leave the absorption center. Specific recommendations in this regard further explained under evaluation question 2.2. While this recommendation is meant to provide ongoing outcome monitoring and will take time to implement, the Evaluation Team also recommends that in the short-term, PRM commission a survey of past residents of the absorption centers. While it was the Evaluation Team's intention to conduct such a survey, the lack of a centralized data management system with contact information of residents who had left the absorption centers did not permit for it during the contract's period of performance. During the desk review process, the Evaluation Team was informed that contact data was not available. However, while conducting the fieldwork, the team learned that each absorption center tended to have contact information of some past residents stored in local Excel sheets and/or case files. While not stored or collected systematically, it provides a base of information that would allow for the administration of a past participant survey as an immediate interim solution until a robust outcome monitoring process is adopted. This information would need to first be collected locally and compiled from the various sources within each center. The Evaluation Team developed a *Past Participant Survey* (Annex G, section F) which, administered to a sample of migrants using this contact information, would serve as a first step to understanding the extent of longterm integration of migrants.

**Language**

**1.2** As Ulpan is provided by the Ministry of Education and it appears to be effective for most migrants, no significant changes are suggested other than for the absorption centers to begin to integrate language scores with other data collected after migrants leave the absorption

center. This would begin to show what final score is actually required for effective integration into the larger society.

**1.3** It might be helpful for absorption center educational staff to provide additional opportunities for elderly migrants to continue their language study past standard *Ulpan*. This could be as simple as bringing in Israelis for discussions or role-playing tasks that the elderly might have to undertake such as visits to the doctor.

**Preparation for Employment**
The unemployment rate in Israel is low at 4%. The labor market has the capacity to absorb qualified labor into decent jobs. In accordance with the international best practices reviewed in the Desk Review, employment is a key aspect of integration and workforce preparation programs should (1) collaborate with the private sector for training opportunities, (2) support job placement, (3) create opportunities for entrepreneurship, and (4) focus training on technology and STEM jobs. FSU migrants have opportunities to participate in technology and STEM trainings aligned to the local labor markets including computer programming and Computer Numerical Control (CNC). However, Ethiopian migrants have more limited entrees into these established programs. Moreover, entrepreneurial training or avenues for entrepreneurship are not readily available to both migrant populations. For Ethiopian migrants to be better prepared for employment in Israel, they need to be able to access professional training or academic preparation programs, as is appropriate. In the case of the HMI program, the following recommendations could be considered as options to meet this programming gap and align to best practices:

**1.4** In the current absorption centers that serve Ethiopian migrants, it is recommended to include at least two professional training courses aligned to the local market annually and the Taka program for those who wish to continue their university studies[3]. Place migrants in the currently offered professional training programs at other absorption centers according to the educational backgrounds required of each program. Partner with a university or professional training offeror to offer courses on the absorption centers' campus and work with the trainers to tailor to the needs of the Ethiopian communities.

**1.5** Absorption center staff could reduce barriers to participating in training courses by scheduling in the evening or at times when migrants are least likely to work. The need for migrants to work at least part-time during their absorption process will continue, but by scheduling around common work schedules, migrants will be able to improve their skills and opportunities for higher-wage employment.

**1.6** Staff responsible for supporting employment opportunities could create avenues for entrepreneurship by partnering with the ISMEA at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, who offer training and services geared to new immigrants and in partnership with the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption. Expand beyond the current FSU women focused workshops which are hosted at the absorption center and link migrants to their local Small Business Development Center (MATI, in Hebrew).

**Housing**
**1.7** Given the situation in Israel, there is little that can be done by UIA/JAFI to improve the current experience around acquiring housing upon leaving the absorption centers. The amount of the Government of Israel grants provided to Ethiopian migrants is fixed and determined solely by the government. In the past, the grant covered the majority of the cost of purchasing a house, however with housing cost increases and inflation, this is no longer true. Newer Ethiopian migrants continue to expect that the amount of the grant would be sufficient to purchase a house based on previous migrants' experience. This expectation could be moderated earlier before and upon arrival,

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[3] Since the evaluation conclusded, UIA/JAFI informed the Evaluation Team that new Ethiopian students were accepted into the Taka program among the new wave of Ethiopian migrants (2019).

so that migrants understand that they will need to earn a sufficient income through employment to pay for at least part of the mortgage. This reality could be made part of the initial introductions and reiterated whenever assistance related to housing is provided.

## B. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

*2.1 What adjustments to the HMI program would better prepare participants, particularly those living temporarily in absorption centers, for long-term integration?*

**2.1.1** The Employment Advisor plays an important and valuable function for the migrant population – particularly in regard to information about credentialing and degree conversions in the Israeli context. His or her services would be significantly enhanced – particularly for the higher-educated Ethiopian community - if provided with additional human resources support. Currently, there is one Employment Advisor to provide services for all the residents in the absorption centers. A scheme in which at least two additional advisors under his/her direction were engaged to serve a designated list of centers would ensure that a larger number of migrants could be provided with this critical support. The possibility of engaging interns to support the Employment Advisor's work, may help meet this need while mitigating budget constraints.

**2.1.2** In absorption centers where children's programs are not available and a need exists, educational staff could consider providing children's services at no charge to the parents and during training/study hours for parents. Where human and financial resources are scarce, engaging high school, university, and community volunteers can help bridge gaps and provide an enriching experience for both groups.

**2.1.3** It is recommended that more special programs for elderly migrants such as clubs, especially for Ethiopians, should be developed by absorption center staff. Even if these migrants remain in the absorption centers far past the standard program, efforts to provide useful activity is necessary. Given the issue of domestic disputes, perhaps a process for engaging the elderly as a resource to help resolve disputes could be part of the programs for the elderly. This would work well within the Ethiopian cultural context, given that elders commonly hold roles in Ethiopia related to household and community conflict prevention, resolution, and mediation.

*2.2 How can the UIA concretely measure integration success in language acquisition, employment, and self-reliance?*

In order to monitor performance more effectively while migrants are residents at absorption centers, the following modifications to current practice are required (further detail and suggestions in Annex H):

**2.2.1** To better measure success, UIA/JAFI senior staff could provide resources (time and staff) to allow disparate data from the satisfaction survey - recommended to be collected all migrants - the *Ulpan* language scores, and data already stored in JUMP to be centralized in JUMP and linked to specific migrants through unique identifiers. This would entail losing the anonymity factor of the satisfaction survey and should be analyzed if appropriate.

**2.2.2** Additional indicators related to employment including (1) job acquired while residing in absorption center and (2) efforts related to finding employment upon leaving center; and housing upon leaving the center including (1) source of housing information, (2) location, if known, and (3) type of housing; would be included in the performance monitoring system. Additional data entry fields for the above-mentioned indicators would need to be included in JUMP. The JAFI Strategy, Planning and Content Unit could assist

in the development of a performance monitoring procedurals manual would need to be created in coordination with the Evaluation unit which outlines the specific times, roles, and responsibilities of staff in recording the information in JUMP.

To measure integration into Israeli society, the HMI program could consider including an outcome monitoring component to their performance management practice. In this regard, the following actions are recommended (further detail in Annex I) to be completed by absorption center staff with assistance from the JAFI Strategy, Planning and Content Unit:

**2.2.3** To improve monitoring, the creation of a procedure for periodic contact and data collection on migrants who have left the absorption centers would be useful. It is recommended to establish specific periods for follow-up, such as one-year post-exit, three-years, and up to five years; as well as specific mechanisms for data collection (phone, in-person, online, or a combination). Record up-to-date contact information on each migrant in JUMP upon leaving the absorption center (and each time after) and acquire their consent for follow-up. Create a standardized survey to be applied during each follow-up activity and recorded directly in Salesforce, linked to the migrant. Use a representative sample-based approach to tracking migrants after their leave the center, to allow for a loss in contacts and save on resources while still speaking to particular population groups. Guidance from the JAFI Strategy, Planning and Content Unit will ensure that the effort fits within larger JAFI efforts to improve their data collection and use strategies.

**2.2.4** Finally, in order to ensure the usability of the data collected, it is recommended that all absorption center staff should receive ongoing training in using JUMP and generating reports on individuals or trends in aggregate for their own and the center's use. These trainings and the roll-out of the expanded use of JUMP would need to be well-coordinated with the JAFI Evaluation Unit. The Evaluation Unit should share back data in aggregate in intermittent periods to highlight successes, learning opportunities, or challenges for staff to be aware of.

## C. BENEFICIARY FEEDBACK

*3.1 To what extent did beneficiaries report that the integration assistance provided by UIA and its partners was useful?*

While direct contact with absorption center staff provides immediate opportunities for determining if they are meeting migrant needs, a regular process of check-in would give them more assurance to the migrants that they are being heard. Regular data collection processes for all beneficiaries, as mentioned above, would provide a ongoing information for learning by staff at all levels.

**Access to information**
**3.1.1** Access to information could be improved by maintaining a web presence for each absorption center. This could be accomplished through (1) the creation of websites on each absorption center linked to JAFI's homepage, and/or (2) the creation of Facebook pages maintained by absorption center staff. The information that migrants feel is most useful includes the absorption centers' facilities (pictures of rooms, staff, amenities, etc.), the centers' activities and offerings (children's center, workforce program, etc.), a list of items provided for residence at the center, information about the local housing market (prices, grants, searching mechanisms), information about the local job market (in-demand professions, universities, etc.), links to information on Hebrew language classes hosted by the Ministry of Education, and local banks and grocery stores near the center. It would be helpful to translate materials included into multiple languages. While a website is generally more static, by complementing it with the use of Facebook – widely used among the FSU community – crowd-sourced information would also help provide future potential migrants with a better sense of what awaits them. In

doing so, migrants' expectations will be better aligned to reality and they will be given more information to ensure they are in the right center and program for their needs.

*3.2 How better can UIA and JAFI gather and incorporate into its programming beneficiary feedback?*

**3.2.1** Once the program has implemented a more consistent data collection process and absorption center directors are more skilled at using the JUMP system, regular sharing of the data on what is happening at each center could become part of the regular directors' meetings.

# VII. SUPPORT FOR PRM STRATEGY

The HMI Program speaks directly to the overall goal of supporting permanent solutions to the displacement of individuals in countries under duress. The first priority of the Functional Bureau Strategy, "rapid coordinated humanitarian response to emergencies" is supported by the ongoing presence of program staff in Former Soviet Union countries such as Ukraine and Belarus where changing political situations threaten the Jewish population. The HMI Program's activities also reflect the fourth priority of the strategy to "meet unique protection needs of vulnerable populations." The vulnerable populations in question are the Jewish population of Ethiopia who are viewed as outsiders and those from the former Soviet Union who are subjected to ongoing antisemitism. In addition, many of the migrants served by the program are the elderly, children, and single heads of households who face additional vulnerabilities.

Specific activities carried out by the HMI program such as providing language and employment training meets Goal 2, Objective 2.3, "Advance refugees' local integration and self-reliance." By focusing on employment, the HMI program supports DOS/PRM Strategy goal of equalizing the income gap suffered by these populations.

While the evaluation has identified recommendations regarding improvement in JAFI's monitoring system, their excellent cooperation in this evaluation is very supportive of both Objective 4.2 of doing evaluation and the cross-cutting goal of improved monitoring and performance management.

One area where the HMI Program could more explicitly support the strategy is in the area of gender-based violence (GBV). This was not an area of focus for the evaluation so while the team was made aware of the existence of issues of GBV at the absorption centers, it was not explicitly discussed with staff. This is being addressed on an ad hoc basis, but a more systematic approach would be more helpful and beneficial to PRM strategy. An initial step would be to provide training in recognizing and addressing GBV for staff. Given the cultural complexities with the Ethiopian migrants, it would be useful to raise the awareness of elders and engage them through the mediation/conflict resolution processes recommended previously. However, a more systematic understanding of this issue would be necessary before concrete recommendations can be provided. With a more robust monitoring system, JAFI could begin to track the actual prevalence of the issue in order to develop a policy and practice for addressing it.

## ADEQUACY OF PRM PERFORMANCE INDICATOR FOR THE FUNCTIONAL BUREAU STRATEGY

The following section provides an assessment of the indicator that is currently reported on by PRM as part of the Functional Bureau Strategy. The indicator under review is as follows:

*"Percentage of migrants to Israel satisfied with all mandatory services received."*

The indicator provides a perspective on the condition of migrants as they experience program services. It is important for PRM to see that migrants are being provided quality services, in order to inform Goal 4. However, given the data currently collected by UIA/JAFI, as has been reviewed in this report, it is unclear

that PRM is being provided with full information on the satisfaction of *all* migrants as they move through the *entirety* of the program. UIA/JAFI currently collects data on satisfaction with the services provided at the beginning of migrants' experience, namely the services received in their country of origin before their arrival to Israel and the services received immediately after arrival. In addition, this data is currently only being collected from migrants' emigrating from the FSU. In order to meet the information needs for Goal 2 and Objective 2.3, consistent satisfaction data would need to be collected first, from all migrants supported by the PRM grant to UIA/JAFI (adding Ethiopian migrants to the survey), and second, at periodic points to reflect the entirety of the services provided to migrants during their stay in the absorption centers. With this in mind, the Evaluation Team recommends this indicator to be revised as follows:

*"Percentage of humanitarian migrants to Israel satisfied with services received during emigration to Israel and/or during their first two years."*

While a satisfaction indicator is useful in terms of understanding the perception of migrants about the services, this indicator does not however measure the efficiency or effectiveness of the humanitarian services provided nor the degree to which these services support longterm integration. Therefore, it is not accurate measure of achievement of the objective of "between 2017-2020, humanitarian migrants are resettled in Israel and achieve self-sufficiency" and thus, Goals 1 and 2.

Given the current data collection and storage practices of UIA/JAFI, as has been described in this report and in the *Monitoring Tools Report*, they would not be able to report on more robust indicators related to integration and self-sufficiency which would better reflect achievement of the objective and PRM strategy goals. In order to begin addressing the provision of information that shows support for the first two goals, PRM would need to work with UIA/JAFI to begin developing a more robust monitoring and evaluation system that would provide data that tracks the degree to which the services provided are the services most needed and the services that most promote integration given the changing nature of the migrant population